

Message Text

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SUBJ: FIRST FORMAL CALL ON THE NARC LEADERSHIP

1. AT THEIR INVITATION, I CALLED THIS AFTERNOON (OCTOBER 29) ON ADMIRAL SA-NGAT CHALOYU, AIR MARSHAL KAMON DETCHATUNGKA, AND GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN, THE PRINCIPAL FIGURES IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM COUNCIL (NARC) WHICH HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED, SINCE IN THE INSTALLATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PRIME MINISTER THANIM KRAIWICHIAN, INTO THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL. THIS WAS MY FIRST CONTACT WITH THESE LENTLEMEN SINCE THE GOVERNMENTAL CHANGE OF OCTOBER 6, THOUGH I HAD INDICATED MY WILLINGNESS TO MEET WITH ADMIRAL SA-NGAT "AT HIS CONVENIENCE" IMMEDIATELY AFTER MY RETURN TO BANGKOK. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT SA-NGAT AND HIS COLLABORATORS EARNESTLY WISHED TO AVOID GIVING THE IMPRESSION EITHER DOMESTICALLY OR TO FOREIGN AUDIENCES THAT THERE HAD BEEN U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR TAKEOVER OR THAT THEY WERE "GETTING INSTRUCTIONS" FROM THE U.S. REGARDING THE MAKEUP OF THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT OR THE INITIAL POLICY LINES THEY WERE LAYING OUT FOR IT.

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2. AT TODAY'S MEETING, THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS WERE DISCUSSED:

A. THE PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S.
THIS SUBJECT IS OF PRIME IMPORTANCE TO THE NARC AND ITS LEADERSHIP. THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY CONVINCED THAT WITHOUT ACCESS TO MAP AND/OR FMS CREDITS THAILAND'S POSITION BECOMES PERILOUSLY EXPOSED. THEY WERE ALSO VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE NEED FOR SEPARATE LEGISLATION NEXT YEAR IF THE JUSMAG IS TO BE MAINTAINED BEYOND SEPTEMBER 30, 1977, AND, AS KRIANGSAK STATED, "WE MUST BEGIN PLANNING NOW" TO COPE WITH THE VARIOUS CONTINGENCIES THAT CONFRONT THEM. I INFORMED THEM THAT IT WAS OUR INTENTION TO CONTINUE A CLOSE AND CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP AND THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS PREPARED TO SEEK FUTURE MAP AND FMS CREDITS FOR THAILAND. I NOTED, HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE TO THEIR QUESTION AS TO "WHO WILL WIN NEXT TUESDAY?" THAT OUR PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS INTRODUCED AN ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WITH PRECISION WHAT THE SHAPE OF FUTURE U.S. FOREIGN MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM MIGHT BE.

B. THAILAND'S IMAGE IN THE U.S.
I FOUND ALL THREE OFFICERS VERY MUCH AWARE OF AND CONCERNED ABOUT THAILAND'S IMAGE IN THE U.S. AND IN THE WORLD AT LARGE IN THE WAKE OF THE TAKEOVER OF OCTOBER 6. THEY REALIZE THAT THE PHOTO AND TELEVISION COVERAGE SENT OUT OF BANGKOK DURING THE DAY OF OCTOBER 6 HAS BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR REGIME THOUGH THE ACTUAL VIOLENCE TRANSPIRED WHILE THE SENI GOVERNMENT WAS STILL IN POWER. THEY ASKED HOW THIS ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION MIGHT BE CORRECTED AND I RESPONDED CANDIDLY THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE AND THAT THE IMPORTANT THING FOR THE RTG TO BEND ITS EFFORTS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE TO EXPUNGE THIS INACCURATE BUT NEVERTHELESS UNFORTUNATE IMAGE BY POSITIVE PROGRAMS AND A DEMONSTRATED CAPACITY TO MOVE THE NATION IN A PROGRESSIVE DIRECTION.

C. THE FIRING OF UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ANAN PANYARACHUN
GENERAL KRIANGSAK WISHED IT "CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD" THAT ANAN'S ABRUPT FIRING ON OCTOBER 22 WAS NOT MOTIVATED OUT OF REVENGE BECAUSE HE HAD CONDUCTED THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE AMERICAN PRESENCE EARLIER THIS YEAR NOR BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN MOVING THAILAND TOWARDS A RAPPROCHMENT FIRST WITH CHINA AND LATER WITH THAILAND'S COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS (CAMBODIA, LAOS AND
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VIETNAM). KRIANGSAK THEN WENT ON TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE COMMUNIST WORLD WOULD BE PRAGMATIC. HE NOTED THAT THE RTG HAD NOT RESPONDED IN ANY THOUGHTLESS, SPASMODIC WAY TO THE VITRIOLIC ATTACKS OF VIENTIANE, HANOI AND MOSCOW. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT THE LEADERSHIP WOULD HOLD THEIR PEACE FOR THE MOMENT AND WATCH DEVELOPMENTS. THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY PLEASED WITH CHINA'S UNPERTURBED REACTION TO THE OCTOBER 6 TAKEOVER, THOUGH THEY REALIZED THAT PEKING'S PREOCCUPATION WITH

EVENTS CLOSER TO HOME PROBABLY WENT A LONG WAY TOWARDS
EXPLAINING THIS PHENOMENON.

D. RESIDUAL MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS

THE DISCUSSION THEN BECAME QUITE DETAILED AND SPECIFIC REGARDING
THE STILL-PENDING NEGOTIATIONS COVERING AMMUNITION IN THAILAND,
ICS AND THE CHIANG MAI SEISMIC STATION. THIS PORTION OF THE
MEETING WILL BE COVERED AT LENGTH IN SEPTEL. ESSENTIALLY, HOWEVER,
ALL THREE OFFICERS INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE
THESE NEGOTIATIONS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THE PRICE OF THE AIT
AND THE SHORT TERM PERIOD OVER WHICH THEY MUST PAY IT REMAINS
A STUMBLING BLOCK, BUT THEY WANT TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS IMMEDIATELY
IN AN EFFORT TO FIND SOME MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION.

3. COMMENT. ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED COULD NOT
HAVE BEEN MORE CORDIAL AND RELAXED. THERE WAS A GOOD DEAL OF
BANDINAGE AS WELL AS AN EASY RAPPORT BETWEEN THE THREE THAI
PRINCIPALS. THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE GROUP AND THE MAN OBVIOUSLY IN
CHARGE WAS KRIANGSAK, BUT THE OTHER TWO FOLLOWED WITH CLOSE
ATTENTION WHAT HE HAD TO SAY AND THERE WERE SEVERAL OCCASIONS WHEN
THE THREE DISCUSSED SPECIFIC POINTS IN THAI BETWEEN THEM BEFORE
KRIANGSAK CAME BACK TO ME IN ENGLISH. A WARM, CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE UNITED STATES IS OBVIOUSLY VERY IMPORTANT TO THE NARC
LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS CONTINUING MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THERE
SEEMS A REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATTENTION THAT MUST BE PAID
TO U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION IF THAILAND IS TO OBTAIN
THE ESSENTIAL MATERIAL THEY FEEL IT NEEDS.
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